

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06452 072034Z

ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, ELAB, SOPN, PN, PQ

SUBJECT: ANTI-TREATY ACTIVITIES IN CANAL ZONE

1. ON SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 3, ANTI-TREATY CANAL ZONE RESIDENTS HELD A 30-MINUTE RALLY IN FRONT OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN BLABOA. ORGANIZERS CLAIM AROUND 500 ATTENDEES, BUT OBSERVER PRESENT ESTIMATED 200-300, WHICH APPEARED TO INCLUDE A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF POLICE, FIREMEN AND TEACHERS.

2. PRINCIPAL SPEAKER WAS WILLIAM DRUMMOND, WHO REPEATED FAMILIAR VITRIOLIC DENUNCIATION OF TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, AND OF USG FOR SIGNING A TREATY YIELDING CANAL TO IT. HE ACCUSED OTHER ZONE LABOR LEADERS OF HAVING SOLD OUT BY ACQUIESCING IN TREATY, AND REPRESENTED HIMSELF AS SOLE REMAINING AUTHENTIC EMPLOYEE SPOKESMAN. HE INTENDED TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON TO SEEK SPECIFIC DETAILS ON JOB PLACEMENT GUARANTEES, AND/OR EARLY RETIREMENT OPTIONS, FOR AMERICAN AND PANAMANIAN EMPLOYEES WHO WOULD DEPART IF TREATY WERE RATIFIED.

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06452 072034Z

3. DRUMMOND DEPARTED PANAMA EARLY SEPTEMBER 4. HE ANNOUNCED AT RALLY THAT HE WOULD RETURN NOT LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 15, WHEN HE MIGHT ADDRESS ANOTHER RALLY AND, DEPENDING UPON WHAT HE COULD LEARN IN WASHINGTON, MIGHT RECOMMEND "FURTHER ACTION" (I.E. STRIKE OR OTHER JOB ACTION). FUNDS WERE COLLECTED AT RALLY TO SUPPORT TRIP.

4. ANTI-TREATY GROUPS IN ZONE SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED A CANDLELIGHT PROTEST COINCIDENT WITH TREATY SIGNING AT 1830 HOURS SEPTEMBER 7. PURPOSE ANNOUNCED TO MEDIA IS TO COMMEMORATE "DEATH OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY" IN CANAL ZONE INHERENT IN NEW TREATY. PROTEST WILL BE HELD AT GOETHALS MEMORIAL NEAR ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, AND MAY INCLUDE A MARCH TO AN UNSPECIFIED LOCATION WITHIN CANAL ZONE.

5. AT LEAST TWO US NETWORK TV CREWS, PLUS A NUMBER OF US NEWSPAPER AND WIRE SERVICE REPORTERS, ARE ON ISTHMUS AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO COVER THIS PROTEST FOR US MEDIA.

6. THERE IS WIDESPREAD APPREHENSION AMONG ZONE RESIDENTS, PARTICULARLY ANTI-TREATY ORGANIZERS OF THESE PROTESTS, THAT FRIDAY'S RALLY IN PANAMA CITY ADJACENT TO ZONE WILL LEAD TO INCURSIONS. RESIDENTS FEAR THAT ANTI-TREATY STUDENTS WILL SEEK TO FOMENT AN INCIDENT, POSSIBLY INCLUDING ANOTHER DESECRATION OF US FLAG AT SHALER TRIANGLE. ANOTHER FEAR IS THAT GOP HAS MISLED ITS PEOPLE TO ASSUME THAT ZONE WILL CEASE TO EXIST UPON SIGNING OF TREATY, AND THAT CROWDS WILL THEREFORE SEEK TO ENTER ZONE.

7. COMMENT: WE DOUBT THAT WEDNESDAY PROTEST WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 06452 072034Z

DRAW MORE THAN A FEW HUNDRED. VAST MAJORITY OF ZONE RESIDENTS ARE UPTIGHT, STILL BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN BADLY TREATED, AND STILL MISTRUST THE "ASSURANCES" THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM USG TO DATE. MOST STILL DO NOT APPEAR DISPOSED TO FOLLOW THE MOST VOCAL EXTREMISTS INTO THIS SORT OF OPEN OPPOSITION. BUT ABSENCE AS YET OF SPECIFICS ON JOB GUARANTEES OFF ISTHMUS, AND/OR EARLY RETIREMENT, CONTINUE TO BE GRIST FOR MILL OF DRUMMOND'S ILK.
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